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Citizens on the Shop Floor: Negotiating Class, Citizenship and National Identity in a Turkish State Factory

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines discourses on citizenship and nation at shop floor level through Bakırköy Cloth Factory – a state-owned factory in Istanbul, Turkey. Founded as a private enterprise in 1850, Bakırköy became the State Industrial Office's property in 1932 and of Sümerbank, the young Turkish state's bank and industrial holding company in charge of textile production in 1933. Having survived such a drastic regime change, the factory's first two decades under Sümerbank were shaped by the ruling classes' zealous and simultaneous efforts of nation-building and industrialization. In the ruling classes' popular projection, the alleged conversion of an unproductive industrial relic of the imperial past into an example of Republican hard work and patriotism provided opportunities for workers to repay their debt to the nation and its forefathers. In the context of the displacement and mediation of class conflict via nationalist discourses, this study explores how this industrial national space became the site of discursive struggles on national belonging and citizenship. Material from parliamentary debates and media coverage is linked with workers' files to offer a micro-historical perspective on the interactions between class and nation.

KEYWORDS

Sümerbank; working-class citizenship; national belonging; working-class politics; republican Turkish history

State-led industrialization in Turkey occurred in the context of zealous nation-building. The simultaneous processes of industrialization and nation-building created interactions, contentions, and frictions between working-class and national discourses inextricably linking the formation of the former to the latter's articulation. These interactions signalled a new phase in the relationship between the working class and the state while simultaneously legitimizing a new figure: the working-class citizen. With the rise of Kemalist nationalism as a hegemonic discourse, workers found themselves captive to a new language for the assertion of their rights in which the construction of national identity and citizenship and working-class identity and politics became increasingly intertwined. This hegemonic discourse played a double role in the constitution of working-class politics and discourses. It provided workers with a national identity as free people of a freed country; the homeland's salvation saved them from the status of colonial subjects and made them free citizens. The same narrative, however, also put them eternally in debt to the nation and the homeland, the rebuilding of which depended on their toil. With their underlying claim to disinterested universality, the discourses of national belonging and citizenship cut across classes in opening the national space to all citizens. Class inequalities were discursively denied, as can be seen in the famous description of Turkish people as 'an integrated mass of people with no class or privilege.'¹ Mainly because of its adherence to populism, Kemalist nationalism was already potentially prey to attempts to de-legitimise its dominant assumptions. Citizenship rights and duties became the site of

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discursive struggles where such attempts at re-appropriating meaning were made since they fuelled working-class claims both for the betterment of working conditions and for political participation. In the absence of trade unions, the presence of an increasingly repressive state (especially in wartime) and the prevalence of a nationalist ideology, the repertoires of action available to workers of the early Republican period, especially to those working at state factories, were mainly confined to battles at the margins. To be successful in making claims and to gain political recognition workers had to speak within the language of national industrial development. Their encounters with the Turkish state contained moments of ideological struggle to give concrete content to these expectations as well as the abstract notion of membership in the nation and the boundaries of citizenship.

Despite recent inroads, an important shortcoming of early Republican historiography is the 'state-centred' approach that still dominates many of its research questions, putting the rationale, motivation and goals of the state at the centre of analysis. The standard narrative of Turkish labor history portrays the predominance of nationalism as the more or less direct and necessary outcome of state's control over working-class politics (Erişçi, 1951; Güzel, 1996; Insel, 1984; Insel, 1996; Makal, 2007; Sülker, 1987). The question of how and in what terms the working-class citizen was constructed from below, however, has not been addressed. Through this micro-study of class and the consciousness of citizenship on the shop floor, I analyse the development of national and citizenship identities under repressive single-party rule as a site of social struggle arising from the workplace. I treat citizenship as a social construct that transcends the formal juridical realm to include political symbols and popular culture and, thus, brings the everyday experience of working-classes to the centre of analysis. I will provide examples for the two different ways citizenship could function in relation to working-class politics: first, by 'providing the languages, rhetoric, and even the formal categories for claims-making, sometimes in the name of national belonging' and second as the articulation of 'specific rights, duties, or protections, or visions of political participation' (Canning & Rose, 2001, p. 431). The archival materials I discuss here illustrate the processes by which workers acted upon the state's definition of citizenship by constantly questioning and challenging its prescriptions, borders and delineations on the shop floor as well as within the labor movement.

Archival material is scarce and mostly produced by the state during this period; consequently, it is extremely difficult to hear workers' voices. Although very few archival documents from below do exist, these documents exemplify 'the exceptional normal', a term coined by Edoardo Grendi (1977) that has since been widely associated with micro-history. Carlo Ginzburg and Carlo Poni argued that 'a truly exceptional (and thus statistically infrequent) document can be much more revealing than a thousand stereotypical documents' and they function "as clues to or traces of a hidden reality, which is not usually apparent in the documentation' (Ginzburg & Poni, 1991, p.8). In dealing with these documents that sometimes even lack narrative beginnings and endings, I am inspired by Clare Anderson's treatment of the fragments of archival material on subaltern lives in the nineteenth-century Indian Ocean. The archival material I present here could be read as fragments or biographical snapshots from the life histories of two weavers at Bakırköy Factory. As Anderson argues for the life histories she examines, they are significant in their own right but that significance is 'magnified when they ... are placed within broader social and political contexts' (Anderson, 2012:17). Piecing together those fragments not only centres non-elites in historical writing, it also provides an entrée into some of the big questions of state formation and nation-building (Anderson, 2012: 187). By anchoring fragments from these weavers' life histories in the general development of Kemalist nationalism, my purpose is to 'shift our gaze from the general theme and theory to the particular and precise experience of people and groups' with the result of these two levels checking and illuminating each other (Brown, 2009, p. 587). As well as cultivating a better understanding of the cultural and discursive politics of Kemalist nationalism, this anchoring opens the possibility to 'empathetically imagine' (Margadant, 2000, p. 7) what they meant for workers.

Sümerbank Bakırköy factory: from the empire to the republic

Started as a private enterprise in the decaying Ottoman economy and ended as a Republican national factory embodying the ambitions, desires and shortcomings of the Kemalist nationalist

project, the history of Bakırköy Factory presents an unusual historical continuity in a region where ruptures and disappearances are common. From an imperial relic to a national factory that ceased to exist materially but continues its symbolic existence as one of the young Republic's successes, this history could be studied from different perspectives to shed light on the economic, political and social changes of the last 150 years. The factory's symbolic significance is so high even today that under the conditions of the Justice and Development Party's ideological attack on Kemalist nationalism and its economic policy of neoliberalism, it has strong nostalgic value for the educated middle classes as the symbol of a lost golden past. An artefact of the imperial past from which the newly established Republic tried very hard to disconnect, this enterprise was handled and presented as a national factory in the sense that its operation was in the service of the nation and its workers were expected to be conscious of their duty towards the homeland. Thus, in addition to improvements in physical and technical arrangements that quadrupled production capacity and increased production quality,² additional facilities such as showers and a nursery for female workers were constructed soon after Sümerbank, established to run state factories, took the factory over. Bakırköy was now 'a perfect example for all Turkish factories.'³ It manufactured predominantly for the army, one of the main reasons why it was repeatedly praised for the service it provided to the nation.⁴

I conceptualise this national factory where the institutional relationship between the apparatuses of factory and state tended towards fusion, and where labour and state came into direct contact with each other, as a microcosm of state–labour relations in the early Republican period. It was here that the Turkish state faced the Turkish citizen in an employer–employee relationship. Workers' experiences both on the shop floor and beyond reflect the fluid boundary between class and citizenship identities and illustrate the permeability between these two discourses. Workers' position as the nation's wealth producers served as a basis for their claims-making in different historical contexts. While the state's protection was demanded 'against the predatory actions of all employers' in the British context, for example (Steinberg, 1995, p. 26), under the condition of state as employer in 1930s Turkey, state protection was demanded not 'against' a third party of employers; it was demanded *from* the state *against* the state on the basis of the 'worker citizen' as a social and political identity. Following the advice of Natalie Zemon Davis, who argued, 'a remarkable dispute can sometimes uncover motivations and values that are lost in the welter of the everyday' (Davis, 1983, p. 4), we will now visit an exceptional case of a dispute on the shop floor.

Work stoppage, military duty and claims-making during war times

A few months before the May 1950 elections and amidst heated debates on the scope and conditions of the then recently enacted social insurance law, the Prime Minister paid a visit to Bakırköy Factory. Desperate to win working-class electoral support in face of the opposition party's increasing support, he summarized the ruling party's understanding of state–worker relations as follows:

*I regard the workers in our factories as the moral and good sons of our homeland. That is why I enact beneficial laws for the workers such as the elder and insurance laws one after another. As much as we have done these as our duty, by means of paying your debt to the homeland, you not only serve both your homeland and your families but you also stop our money from going abroad by meeting the homeland's needs. Tell these things to your fellow workers whom I could not talk to due to the noise of the machines and make sure no foreign man joins you.'*⁵

The Prime Minister's summary reveals a number of assumptions, manipulations and demands of Kemalist nationalist ideology and its perception of state-owned enterprises as an ethical and pedagogical project aimed at achieving the transformation of society. Sidelining the young labour movement's struggles for protective labour laws, the minister presents them as rewards for well behaved 'sons.' In this narrative, the state is 'the giver' bestowing democratic rights upon workers and thus putting them in a relation of 'debt.'⁶ Here, the relationship is carried to a metonymic level; working at a state factory is specified as an alternative way of 'paying your debt to the homeland.'

The metonym elevates the cold and dry wage contract to a heroic level by filling it with emotional content. Finally, the reference to the 'foreign man' refers not to an ethnically or culturally different group of people but to the threat of infiltration by communists, which as we see below, was the state's main concern regarding the trade union movement.

Military duty has historically been the crucible of a national identity for working-class men (Steinberg, 1995). In a competition organized by a trade union newspaper which searched for the best expression of the Turkish worker's characteristics, the entry by a weaver foreman working at a state factory went so far as to collapse the worker identity into military duty: *'The Turkish worker is the Mehmetçik of the industrial field.'*⁷ The parallel drawn between 'Mehmetçik',⁸ a nickname for men enlisted in the army and the industrial worker is based on the idea that both serve the homeland. At a time when the memory of the Independence War was still vivid, elevating industrial labor to the level of homeland protection could be regarded as an attempt to raise workers' social status. Simultaneously, it endowed the 'Turkish worker' with positive qualities associated with soldiers such as self-sacrifice, devotion and resilience. Labour protective policies were often presented as the state's recognition of these qualities and the significance of workers' contributions to this rebuilding project.

A few years before the Prime Minister's visit to Bakırköy, a worker found himself amidst similar associations. The incident was not recorded in factory archives nor reported in newspapers. There is only an incomplete account of what happened before, during and after the incident, which makes charting a full story difficult. Such stories are bound to appear only in fragments, requiring deploying 'informed speculation'. The following biographical snapshot is an exemplary case of industrial conflict where a wage dispute turned into a discussion over the possible meanings and political uses of national belonging and citizenship.

Coming from a remote and poor Black Sea village, at the age of 17 Ahmet migrated to Western Turkey after reading about the opening of a new Sümerbank textile factory in Nazilli in October 1937. He left after 2 years because he could not stand the extremely hot climate. Like many others searching for a job, he came to Istanbul where he first worked for a private textile factory and then worked at Bakırköy between 1941 and 1943, when he left for military service. The following incident, then, happened somewhere during these 2 years in the context of worsening war conditions. Concrete issues that war raised for workers, such as longer hours and food shortages meant substantial changes in working conditions. In addition to increasing consumer prices, changes in the Labor Law also hurt the working population. With the enactment of the National Protection Law on 18 January 1940, the 1936 Labour Law's protective provisions were overturned (Ekin, 1986, p. 44). Ahmet's story illustrates the practical effects of these changes. Before he left for the army in 1943, Ahmet recalls, he worked 12 hours a day. When I asked an old worker from Bakırköy if he ever worked eleven hours a day after he came back from the army in 1943, he responded with laughter and a gesture meaning 'plenty'.⁹ The extension of the working day, however, was not the Bakırköy workers' only problem.

Arriving at work one morning, weavers found that their usual working material, canvas, was replaced with a thicker cotton material, which was much more difficult to work with. This meant a considerable loss of income for the weavers on piece rate payment. Ahmet:

One morning at nine o'clock, the workers said, "We are on strike," [which] means they stop working and turn off the machines ... We got together, the business manager called us to the director's office ... he said "let one of you come as a representative" and I volunteered to go as a speaker. The factory manager told me this: "Your behaviour requires martial law and those fabrics you weave are for our army. This is a serious crime." I answered back: "We will also be in the army tomorrow. We are also getting ready. In the end, in one or two years we will be soldiers and we will have to pay for our own expenses. Nobody else will send us money. We will try to spend there what we save here. I do not accept your allegations." "We," I said, "want our right. The workers here have children and all. Of course we can provide for ourselves and for our children, we are preparing [i.e. saving] for military service, [it is not enough] what the state provides [during the time of military service] ...

"It is not acceptable," he said, "You are making a big mistake, you are committing a crime." He called the police station in Yenimahalle: "Sir, they are on strike here." [...] We went to the police station, the others got away. I told the same thing: "We want our previous wages. The fabric they gave us takes too much time, it needs to be woven carefully, it is different from the canvas, the wage they give us is wrong. They should either give us our previous work or they should adjust the wage levels accordingly". We struggled hard for three-four hours, they increased the wage for each debt from 2 piastres to 4 piastres, we got 100% increase."¹⁰

Ahmet's recollection of his 'first involvement in a strike,' offers insights on the following interrelated points. The first concerns the factory manager's immediate reaction. Whether Ahmet heard the workers say 'we are on strike' or it was actually the management who used the word as he mentioned by the end, the first thing the manager did was to refer to martial law. Strikes were outlawed in this period, and martial law, as explained above, further restricted workers' rights. There was another and more important reason why the machines must have kept working: *'Those fabrics you weave are for our army.'* The manager evoked the interconnectedness between industrial work and protection of the homeland and thus, invoked the notion of patriotic service. This incident illustrates how the state's perception of state workers shaped industrial relations on the shop floor. By speaking in the name of the state, the factory manager achieved an authority the challenging of which would carry the matter well above the realm of factory rules and discipline. With this appeal to hegemonic ideology, the incident takes a twist and becomes a moment of discursive struggle over categories of national identity, belonging and citizenship. The use of patriotic language by the ruling classes as a means of labour control abounds in labour history, and the Turkish case is no exception. What makes this story worth following is Ahmet's appropriation of this dominant language to use it as the basis of claims-making. Instead of backpedalling or adopting a language of benevolence as was common in workers' petitions of this period, Ahmet replied in kind. His reply echoes T. H. Marshall's inclusion of 'the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society' in the definition of citizenship (1964, p. 72).

The idea that patriotic service entitled workers to make claims is evident in the direction Ahmet's argumentation took. Immediately after he mentions his imminent military service, Ahmet makes a straightforward and strong claim on wage levels. 'To be working class,' Charles Tilly defines first and foremost, 'is to interact with capitalist in one's capacity as the bearer of labor power' (Tilly, 1995, p. 12). Ahmet's account of what happened at the police station displays the practical workings of this interaction and the fact that a state worker perceived this not as a relation of service and debt but as a relationship based on a wage contract. He thus links his experience of wage work to the discourse of national belonging and citizenship in this 'multidimensional discursive framework encompassing the languages, rhetoric, and the formal categories for claims-making' (Canning, 2004, p. 241). If we follow Margaret Somers' argument that consciousness of citizenship is the shifting product of local struggles between working people, employers and state authorities, a rights-based positive citizenship identity arises from the struggle Ahmet conducted in this multidimensional framework (Somers., 1993, p. 589).

The use and appropriation of bourgeois discourses by the working-class as a basis for claims-making are battles at the margins of ideological boundaries of industrial relations (Steinberg, 1994, p.515). Instead of a clash between two distinct ideological systems, this contest at the borders shows that rather than being antithetical, class and national languages were two sides of the same historical process unfolding in these struggles (Colley, 1986, p.100). The struggle is not over a new revolutionary language but over the appropriation of 'shared forms of rhetoric and symbolism to a particular class position ... while maintaining an appeal to a presumed system of national political and cultural values that transcend class' (Epstein, 1986, p. 201, 1990, pp. 567–568). As productive members of the nation, this presumed system gave workers the right to hold the state responsible for insuring their rights and including them in the political sphere. By recognizing workers as sons of the nation, it legitimated their status as worker citizens with claims on the state for the protection of their living wage. When they presented themselves as Turkish workers, their demand for a better wage from their Turkish employers could well be located in the discourse of the nation as a family. If the nation's well-being depended on their toil, the workers had the right to demand to improve their

living conditions and have their fair share of that well-being. The cultural ways in which the working classes handled their relations with other classes and the state were firmly anchored in this double character of the dominant discourse.

This was the context in which Ahmet, instead of directly challenging the hegemonic ideology, chose to appropriate and restructure it to legitimize the inclusion of the worker citizen in the national community. As well as building on the notion of the industry's contribution to national economic growth, Ahmet's reply uses a vocabulary of rights and obligations between the worker and the state. He questioned the social legitimacy of the borders of inclusion and exclusion to the national community as well as 'the boundaries of what could be legitimately posed for debate and what actions were sanctified or mandated by societal consensus' (Steinberg, 1994, p. 529). Language, Charles Tilly argues, provides a medium for the establishment and renegotiation of identities bringing together an actor's experience with a public representation of that experience (Tilly, 1995, p. 7). The public representation of the 'patriotic Turkish worker citizen' in this example was shaped within a conflict on the boundaries where 'definitions of the moral, just, and possible were open to contention' (Steinberg, 1994, p. 506). But there was another border lying underneath this seemingly universal definition of working-class citizenship.

A masculine definition of citizenship

Archival material on women workers at Bakırköy is completely silent on how they experienced and acted upon the dominant ideology and discourse despite their presence in large numbers in the factory. In fact, women workers' files are so short and dry – they usually only contain the initial contract – that it is almost impossible to talk on any aspect of their factory experience, including the emergence of 'the new subject positions for women that were articulated in and through the new rhetorics or discourses of citizenship' (Canning, 2004, p. 243). Ahmet's story, however, hints at an understanding of the ways in which citizenship was constructed in gender as well as class terms. Behind the supposedly gender-neutral discourse of citizenship lie numerous tensions and contradictions regarding socially constructed categories (Tilly, 1995, pp. 4–7). Ahmet's claim to a higher wage reinforced the masculine definition of citizenship by implicitly connecting the responsibility towards the nation and the family. Read together, Ahmet's references to the responsibility of having to provide for oneself during military service and for the '*children and all ...*' refers to the context of prototypical male work experiences and reveals the politics of the 'respectable' and 'independent' male worker. The masculine understanding of citizenship was intertwined with gendered conceptions of the family wage and the male breadwinner through the relegation of women to a position of dependency despite their presence on the shop floor. Working men and the working class(es) thus appeared to be synonymous (McClelland, 1996, p. 282).

If we return to the PM's address to Bakırköy workers, we find the contours of Republican moralism and paternalism in the linking of workers' service to the homeland to their identity as male breadwinners. At times an analogy or identification, the relationship between these two categories is built on their interdependent fate for it is impossible for a man to protect and provide for his family when his homeland is not free. The feeling of 'manly pride' derived from the role of provider for these two entities served as a basis for working-class self-esteem and claims-making. 'The tying of citizenship to military service and presumed economic independence,' Charles Tilly noted, had the effect of building 'the system of male-female relations that already prevailed in households, shops and communities directly into the state's own organization' (Tilly, 1995, p. 8). The processes of working-class appropriation of bourgeois discourses can simultaneously reinforce other existing social hierarchies such as those of gender even as they are used to undermine those of class (Steinberg, 1996, pp. 7–8), while at the same time, the state promotes gendered constructs of the public and the private in the process of citizen-subject formation. Citizenship was thus gendered from the beginning 'by the relegation of women to realms of nature, family, domesticity or leisure that were

ostensibly far removed from the terrain of politics' (Canning & Rose, 2001, p. 435). What follows is an example of that process of masculinization of politics.

Citizenship and the demand for political recognition

Enver's career as a textile worker started in 1937 at the Sümerbank owned silk factory in Gemlik where he worked until his military service in 1939. On returning from the army in 1941, he entered Bakırköy Factory where he worked for 29 years until he retired. The positive comments in his file by his supervisors indicate that he was a diligent and disciplined worker who was promoted from being an intern at the weaving department to foreman in less than a year. Besides his successful career at the factory, Enver was also very active in working-class politics. He was a founder of the first trade union at Bakırköy (Türkiye Sendikacılık Ansiklopedisi, 1998, p. 173), although he soon became an adamant critic of this union specifically and the union movement as a whole. He was also the head of the Bakırköy branch of the National Development Party (NDP), the first oppositional political party that was established by a wealthy businessman in July 1945. His name was often mentioned in the weekly newspaper of NDP *Tez Kalkınma* ('Fast Development') where he published both openly signed and unsigned articles written by a worker 'who lives in Bakırköy and works at Sümerbank Bakırköy Factory and who is a member of the textile trade union.'

In the context of increasing partisanship among workers during the second half of the 1940s, Enver's party membership identity grew stronger to the point where he became a candidate in the 1950 parliamentary election. To announce his candidacy, he wrote a letter where he addressed his fellow worker citizens whom he had earlier described as 'committed to his homeland and his nation at least as much as citizens in other occupational groups.'¹¹ Because of its language and content, this public address is a precious document:

My Esteemed Citizens,

My self-sacrificing and patriotic worker friends,

That happy day on which the national will be manifested is approaching. As a worker citizen, I would like to submit my decision to this great and sacred cause by presenting this statement to the noble Turkish people and my fellow workers.

[Since] 1934 I worked as a worker just like you. Since I finished my sacred military duty in 1941, I have been working at Bakırköy Sümerbank Cloth Factory as a weaver foreman. As a young Turk, I have always closely witnessed and known the injustices and the deprivations the Turkish worker faced. Although our workers are unparalleled exemplars of self-sacrifice, patriotism and benevolence in the world, they have unfortunately not been rewarded with the living conditions, the welfare, the happiness necessary for a civilized person and the rewards of their labour. Like any other working person, our workers will be the recipients of the humane treatment they deserve no matter what. I myself have always and continuously struggled for our workers' rights. And I will keep struggling until I die. [...] Especially the big mass of workers has an important role in this election. And there could be people who would try to deceive this sizeable mass.

My dear worker friends, you know it very well that after being elected and making it to Ankara, nobody will be there to hear your problems, nor will they ever contact you again. Only workers could represent workers, those who know what it means to be a worker. The time of generous promises and empty words is over. Our workers should work feeling secure of their current conditions and their future; they should definitely be saved from their slave status in relation to their employers at their workplaces. Only then they could be as productive as they are expected to be. Workers' families, their children, and thousands of workers themselves are suffering from tuberculosis. They are not given the care they deserve. The education and upbringing of the children of workers, who work day and night for the development of our country, are not given the deserved importance. Many of our workers are left to live in insanitary huts near swamps in calamity. Our workers cannot speak against the mistreatments or any other injustice they are subjected to in their workplaces because they are scared of losing their jobs, which would leave their families in hunger and calamity.

They accuse those workers who go too far. There is not a single communist among Turkish workers and there cannot be. Because of [these allegations], workers are condemned to live in fear, suspicion and hesitation.

I thus very closely know and see all the troubles of my fellow workers and they torment me. It is to struggle for these important workers' causes that I have been a member of the National Development Party, which has paid considerable attention to claim workers' rights in its program since its beginning and I come before you as the

worker candidate of the National Development Party from Istanbul. Without any doubt, you have the last say. Only the deputies elected by the people, and a parliament constituted of such deputies would render the national will always prevalent and absolute. Vote freely for people you trust after careful consideration. Thank you all very much. Working and striving from us, blessing from God.

Weaver foreman at Bakırköy Cloth Factory

*Enver Tenşi*¹²

From the opening line, Enver's language presents the interconnected components of working-class identity discussed above. His fellow workers are 'esteemed citizens' who would soon enjoy their political right to elections, according to the opponents of the RPP, for the first time freely on that 'happy day on which the national will is manifested.' To a great extent, their well-deserved esteem stems from their 'self-sacrifice and patriotism' and from the fact that they are 'workers who work hard day and night for the development of our country.' And Enver 'a working citizen' among them. A common theme in working-class identity and politics, pride in labor underpins Enver's appeal when he cites his long years of industrial labour, only interrupted by military service, yet another source of male citizenship identity.

Similar to many other examples from the labour movement of this period, the praise of the Turkish worker is followed by an analysis of the workers' poor living conditions. Emphasizing these Turkish workers' qualities just before claims-making had become an established practice by this time. Next is another familiar reference within the ideology of male citizenship: the miserable living conditions of workers' 'families and children' are a result of them not receiving the 'rewards of labour' needed to live like a 'civilized person.' In Turkish, the word 'family', especially when it is used together with 'children,' refers to the wife. Although Enver does not use masculine pronouns, his general tone thus gives the strong impression that he is talking to his fellow male workers. That he does not mention any issues related to maternity and childcare benefits, issues quite commonly addressed in public discussions at the time, tends to confirm this impression.

In Enver's language, workers 'deserve' not only decent wages but also 'a humane treatment' which could only be achieved through struggle. Although this strong language had become quite common within the trade union movement by that time, it was simply not there a few years before. In fact, between Ahmet's strike experience and Enver's public letter, a dramatic change happened in workers' language of claims-making. In a time span of less than 10 years, petitions written by Bakırköy workers changed dramatically from a language of humility, characterized by such words as 'destitute' or 'servant' to a language in which the petitioner recognizes himself as a worker citizen with rights and obligations.¹³ Within the emergent political culture of the multi-party system, which substantially extended the political space available to workers, they increasingly asserted themselves not as individuals but as a class with legitimate rights and claims. The same optimistic political atmosphere of the multi-party system was behind Enver's faith in the '*free and just elections*' as the mechanism of '*the prevalence of people's will*'. Consistent with this faith in liberal democracy, he did not attribute workers' hard-working and living conditions to a systemic conflict of interests between employers and employees but to practical mistakes in handling the industrialization process. Compelled to improve the situation within the existing relations of production, his prescription to fix the problems is securing the right form of political representation for workers. As such, Enver's political position is one of dissidence, the limits of which were clearly drawn by the hegemonic ideology.

As a whole, Enver's public address displays the efforts of a workingman, 'a man who represented himself in terms of his work, his independence, and his respectability' (McClelland, 1996, p. 291), to be admitted to the political nation as a citizen. In his classic work on citizenship, Marshall argued that citizenship required a 'direct sense of community membership based on loyalty to a civilization which is common possession' (1964, p. 101). By the time Enver addressed his fellow workers, this sense of membership had acquired a new strong dimension: anti-communism, which in the context of the post-World War II international political context and the Marshall aid became one of the strongest new standards for worthiness of recognition in the polity for claims-making.¹⁴ The allegation of communism was used as a weapon of defamation in the context of escalating political oppositions among fractions within the trade union movement as well as by the ruling class to

contain the labour movement within the limits designated by the ruling party. With biological metaphors of communism as a contagious disease that can never infect 'the Turkish worker' abounding, anti-communism became a strong pillar of working-class identity. Enver's strong confidence in claiming that there is not a single communist among Turkish workers and his worried complaint that the workers were condemned to live in fear were the results of this frantically anti-communist working-class political environment.

His hatred for communism, however, did not help Enver in the elections; he worked at Bakırköy until his retirement in 1970. Ahmet's political trajectory, on the other hand, took him to a complete different direction; he was the founding chair of the communist Homeland Party in 1954, he was arrested and lost his job a year later. Ahmet never had stable employment afterwards; although he asked his job back multiple times, he was never admitted to the factory again. Their roads intersected a few more times within the trade union movement the history from below of which still remains to be written. Despite their divergent political paths, their stories present a commonality in terms of the available repertoires of working-class political language and action in the 1940s. They illustrate the limits of dissidence in the highly repressive regime of the early Republican period.

Conclusion

Working-class formation in early Republican Turkey has been widely explained through the actions of a strong state predicated on Kemalist nationalism. The top-down social and political reforms of this period have been referred to as the main dynamics of change, and the ideological victory of Kemalist nationalism has been uncritically perceived as complete. This perspective produces a consensus history that relegates the working classes at best to the status of passive recipients and working-class politics to an empty signifier bereft of a political vocabulary suited to subaltern experiences and desires.

Based on hitherto unknown material in a context of scant and scattered archival documentation, this paper has portrayed a more complex picture of the interactions between class and nation. It did so by focusing on a state factory that was celebrated as one of the symbols of national development. 'This is indeed not an economic enterprise, but a product of military and political concerns.'¹⁵ Such was the happy judgment of a member of the parliament in a commission meeting on the profitability of Sümerbank factories in 1940. As one of these national factories, Bakırköy Factory was an industrial site where workers were expected to relate patriotically and where, to a great extent, the discourse of the national community displaced the labour-capital conflict. Discourses around it manifested various expressions of this displacement ranging from the comparison of factory work with military service to describing a work stoppage attempt as an act of betrayal to the homeland. It thus stands as a microcosm of state-labour relations in the early Republican period when the politics of production and the larger framework of state politics, especially from the perspective of discursive structuring of class-consciousness in relation to the dominant discourse of nationalism, were intertwined.

The article has covered the stories of two Bakırköy weavers who followed completely different political trajectories later in their lives. The story of the work stoppage where a disagreement on production issues turned into a disagreement on the representation and serving of the national interest exemplifies the fluid boundaries between class and citizenship, and illustrates how permeable the two discourses were. Instead of arguing in the lines of workers' rights, Ahmet opted for connecting the interests of the weavers and the nation as a whole. His story illustrated the practical effects of the bargain on 'what the working class could legitimately be asked to produce and what it could also realistically hope to extract from the regime as compensation' on the shop floor. Kenneth M. Straus conceptualized this bargain within the work unit in Soviet factories under Stalin as a defining element of the relationship of the working class to the state. It was through this bargain that the 'shop-floor trends in the work brigade were extended beyond the boundaries of the shop, to the factory, and to the Soviet working class' (1997, 180). Enver's appeal to his fellow working men is an example of that extension in that his claim to political recognition was based on his pride in industrial labour and on its connotations of

serving the homeland. In both cases, we have seen examples of the very terms within which subordinate groups experienced the world and articulated their aspirations. These terms were also gendered.

The present study on the crossing pathways of individual workers and the Turkish state's nation-building project has shown that the nationalist idiom was not the ideological property of the ruling class; the working class also critically adopted it and forged new idioms and languages to press their claims. The definitions of the nation and citizenship stood on a contested terrain, which led to a split in the Turkish labour movement in the mid-1960s. While the mainstream movement continued to pursue a path that rejected militant activism and radical ideologies, the Revolutionary Confederation of Labor Unions (DISK) embraced a radical socialist ideology and organized the most militant actions in Turkish labour history. To understand the background structural and discursive conditions of that militancy, the underpinnings of the emergence of the worker citizen in the early Republican period need to be further studied. Through analysing the references in this period to national belonging and citizenship identity in the working-class languages of legitimization and claims-making as notions of class ideologies, this study has taken the first step in that direction.

Notes

1. Populism embodied this concatenation of economic policy with the peculiar character of the Turkish nation and state. Formulated as one of the Republic People's Party's (RPP) six principles in 1937, the principle of populism was defined in the 1943 Republic People's Party Program as follows:
2. 'Bakırköy Bez Fabrikası' (Bakırköy Cloth Factory), *Akşam* (11 May 1936); 'Bakırköy Bez Fabrikasının Yeni Daireleri Dün Açıldı' (The New Shops of Bakırköy Cloth Factory were Opened Yesterday), *Akşam* (14 August 1934); Hans Landau, *Kayseri, Ereğli, Nazilli, Merinos Fabrikaları Hakkında* (On Kayseri, Ereğli, Nazilli, and Merinos Factories), (n. p., 1938), p.12; *Sümerbank 1939 Yılı Umumi Murakebe Heyeti Raporu* (Sümerbank Supreme Audit Board Report of the Year 1939), p. 5.
3. 'Bakırköy Bez Fabrikasının Yeni Daireleri Dün Açıldı' (The New Shops of Bakırköy Cloth Factory were Opened Yesterday), *Akşam* (14 August 1934).
4. 'Sümerbank Bakırköy Sanayii Müessesesinin 1949 Yılı Raporu' (Report on Sümerbank Bakırköy Industrial Enterprise of the Year 1949), in *Başbakanlık Umumi Murakebe Heyeti 1949 Yılı Raporları* (Prime Ministry Supreme Audit Board Reports of the Year 1949), (Ankara: Başbakanlık Devlet Matbaası, 1950), p. 3.
5. 'Başbakan Şehrimizde Birkaç Gün Daha Kalacak' (The Prime Minister Will Stay a Few More Days in Our City), *Akşam* (5 January 1950).
6. The phrase 'paying the debt to the homeland' ('vatan borcunu ödemek') is an expression still used for compulsory military service in Turkey.
7. 'Müsabakamız' (Our Competition), *Hürbilet* (7 August 1948).
8. 'Mehmet' is the most common Turkish male name, and the suffix 'çik' denotes love and compassion.
9. Asım Kocabaş, interview by Görkem Akgöz, tape recording, 3 August 2009, Istanbul.
10. Interview with Ahmet Cansızoglu conducted by Yıldırım Koç, IISH Collections, BGV1/40-54. Although Cansızoglu does not specify the factory here, the two names he gives are in the inventory of the Bakırköy Cloth Factory, which almost confirms that the factory where this strike took place is Bakırköy, not Nazilli.
11. Kemal Sülker Collection, Folder No. 151, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.
12. Kemal Sülker Collection, Folder No. 151, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam.
13. For a detailed analysis of this change, see (Akgöz, 2017).
14. On the rise of anti-communism within the trade union movement, see Akgöz, 2014).
15. 3460 Sayılı Kanuna Bağlı İktisadi Teşekküllerin 1939 Yılı Bilançoları ile Kar ve Zarar Hesaplarını Tetkik Eden Umumi Murakebe Heyet Zaptı (Supreme Auditory Board's Transcription of the Balance Sheets and Financial Accounts of Industrial Enterprises under Law No. 3460 of the Year 1939) (Ankara: TBMM Matbaası, 1941), p. 37.

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